



Rural Entrepreneurship and Lending VISTA project
VISTA Assignment Description

VAD Title: Rural Community Developer

Site Name: N.C. Rural Economic Development Center / Thread Capital

Primary Focus Area: Economic Development

Goal of the Project:

The goal of the project is to build capacity in the Rural Center's entrepreneurship and lending programs to better serve rural entrepreneurs seeking capital, coaching and connections. The VISTA will build capacity in the following project areas: small business lending, small business coaching, connection to small business markets, fundraising, organizational relationships, and community engagement. The VISTA will develop new program materials, outreach strategies, and organizational relationships. As a result of these activities, the Rural Center will be better equipped to serve entrepreneurs across the state of North Carolina. The beneficiaries of this project include the communities and individuals served by the various programs and projects outlined above.

Performance Period: August 2019 – August 2020

Objective Description:

Build capacity and develop opportunities to support and grow the Rural Center's entrepreneurship & lending programs to help better serve rural entrepreneurs.

Member Activity:

Grow the capacity and reach of the Center's small business lending and coaching programs

- Research the existing program and explore aspects that need improvement
- Engage with stakeholders by attending meetings, trainings, and webinars to increase understanding of the need and opportunities of the state.
- With direction from leadership, conduct outreach to specific stakeholders to gather feedback on opportunities and challenges.

Create a Coalition of community partners (economic development agencies, community colleges, nonprofits, and businesses) to increase awareness and support of the Center's programs and offerings.

- Identify appropriate contacts within community or corporate partner pools.
- Facilitate meetings to share objectives of program and create a coalition of schools, community partners and corporate partners.
- Develop a database with potential community partners

Increase outreach and engagement among underserved markets through North Carolina

- Identify appropriate contacts within underserved markets
- Develop a plan for outreach and implementation of new or existing services

Increase the overall effectiveness and reach of the Center's programs

- Develop community-focused marketing materials, program forms, and related documents
- Identify internal/external opportunities for improving programs and practices to better reach and serve rural entrepreneurs through community-based feedback portals

Identify opportunities for fundraising and sponsorships to support outreach and programmatic activities

- Research and provide recommendations of sources of program funding, such as grants, sponsorships or in-kind donations.
- Create a database of potential funders from foundations and corporate philanthropy sources.
- Member
- Draft and submit at least 3 grants to support the project.

For more information on the AmeriCorps VISTA program, the benefits, and how it works [click here](#). If interested, please submit resume and cover letter to Kayla Dobyms, kdobyms@ncruralcenter.org.